

Introductory Comments – Governor Sam Brownback

Today, I announce my nominee for the 14th seat at the Kansas Court of Appeals.

During the 2013 session the Kansas Legislature, the elected representatives of the citizens of our great state forever changed the process used to select Court of Appeals justices. From this day forward the people will have a greater role to play in this process.

The people through their representatives in the Kansas Senate will have an opportunity to judge the education, experience, and character of Court of Appeals nominees and determine for themselves whether the nominee is well qualified.

In the past, a nominating commission dominated by one organization nominated three individuals for a court position. The Governor was required to pick one of these three. The legislature was not involved in this process at all.

Kansans have a high standard for our appellate judges. And that is why it was personally important to me to select an appointee who I believe is the single most qualified person to fill this vacancy on the Kansas Court of Appeals.

We expect our appellate judges to possess strong character, keen intellect, impeccable integrity, meritorious achievements, and an unyielding interest in and respect for the rule of law. We expect them to carry themselves with humility and character that represents the values of the state born on the prairie.

The person I am nominating for consideration by the State Senate graduated 3rd in his class from KU School of Law. He has bi-partisan support with an endorsement from former Attorney General Steve Six. He clerked for the Chief Justice of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, Deanell Tacha. He worked for the largest law firm in Kansas, was a county prosecutor in a rural Kansas County and was General Counsel for the Governor of Kansas.

But more than that, he is a husband, father of five young men and a fiercely loyal Kansan.

I am honored to formally nominate Caleb Stegall to the Kansas Court of Appeals. If confirmed, Caleb will be one of the most, if not the most, qualified person to go on the Kansas Court of Appeals over the past decade. Caleb's history of academic accomplishment, broad private sector experience and success, commitment to public service, temperament, character, and peer support is without equal.

Caleb's passion for public service comes in part from his parents. His father is a retired community corrections chief with Douglas County. His mother retired after many years of service as a science teacher at Wyandotte High School. They instilled in him an unflinching willingness to do the right thing, even under the most difficult of circumstances.

When you look at the many clients represented by Caleb over the years, you can see his sense of honor, values, and compassion displayed.

For example, one case captured the attention of the worldwide media when Caleb was sought out to represent American Missionaries who were stuck in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Drew Culberth, a Topeka firefighter and youth pastor, and his fellow missionaries had been arrested for kidnapping and child trafficking after attempting to transport Haitian children to the Dominican Republic so they could be fed, clothed, and safely sheltered in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake. Caleb successfully advocated for the complete dismissal of all charges against the missionaries and orchestrated their evacuation from Haiti with the federal Departments of State and Defense.

In recognition of his work to free youth minister Drew Culberth, Caleb received the Kansas Bar Association's 2010 Pro Bono Certificate. Judge Tacha, who is now the Dean of Law at Pepperdine University recently wrote: "That work was emblematic of Mr. Stegall's commitment to the rule of law and to protection of the rights of individuals."

Caleb has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to practicing law for the benefit of those less privileged or who cannot adequately speak for themselves as exemplified by his pro bono representation of Family Promise, a widely praised mission to the homeless. Of particular note, was his work with the City of Lawrence on its regulation of homeless shelters, during which he worked to protect the Constitutional rights of our most vulnerable citizens.

Caleb's aptitude for excellence in the law began early in his career. He earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Kansas, School of Law, graduating in the top 1% of his class. He received the William L. Burdick Prize, annually awarded to the top law student of his or her class. He served as a member of the Kansas Law Review and was elected a member of the Order of the Coif, an honorary scholastic society that recognized excellence in legal education.

His education continued during his prestigious clerkship for Deanell Tacha, Chief Judge of the 10th Circuit US Court of Appeals. The former Dean of KU Law, Professor Stephen McAllister, recently offered the following description of Caleb: "Caleb as a student exhibited just the kind of focus, judgment, and intellect that, in my opinion, would make him an excellent judge."

His background includes private sector experience with the state's largest law firm, practicing complex civil and appellate litigation. Later, he founded his own firm in rural Jefferson County and became one of the most sought-after attorneys in the state to handle high profile litigation. Less than five years after its founding, Stegall and Associates earned recognition in U.S. News and World Reports' listing of the Best Law Firms in Kansas.

His nomination to the Court of Appeals has been endorsed by many pillars of the legal profession, both those who have worked with him and those who have litigated against him. James D. Oliver from Foulston Siefkin LLC recently wrote: "He treats people from all walks of life exactly the same. He is considerate and compassionate, while being objective and logical. He is brilliant and has common sense. He will work well with other judges on the court."

Throughout his career, Caleb has earned the respect and admiration of a broad cross-section of the legal community. The list of men and women endorsing him is truly impressive and includes:

- The President of the Kansas Bar Association
- The Chair of the Kansas Bar Association's bench-bar committee
- The current and immediate past Kansas Attorneys General, one Democrat, the other Republican
- Numerous other well-respected legal scholars and academics, both Democrat and Republican.
- And the Minority Leader of the Kansas House of Representatives, Paul Davis, describes Caleb as "well qualified" to serve as a judge on the Kansas Court of Appeals

His service to the citizens of Kansas also includes serving as the top prosecutor for Jefferson County where he personally handled the most serious felony cases including murder, rape, sexual crimes against children, drug manufacturing and distribution, and white collar crimes. One such case was a homicide prosecution that involved a particularly vicious murder. Caleb fought and obtained a guilty verdict against the defendant for second degree murder.

The Attorney General of Kansas, Derek Schmidt, believes Caleb's experience as a prosecutor distinguishes him from many of his peers. He states: "As the state's chief law enforcement official, I strongly believe that having Mr. Stegall's prosecution experience added to the Court of Appeals would further strengthen the Court and would benefit the administration of the criminal justice system in Kansas."

It has been my personal pleasure to have Caleb serve as my Chief Counsel since I took office in 2011.

His depth of knowledge across the broad spectrum of legal topics continues to impress me. I have never known an attorney who can provide such excellent counsel on so many topics. His outstanding work as Chief Counsel has been noted by others as well. In his recommendation of Caleb, Whitney Damron P.A. wrote that "Should you chose to nominate Mr. Caleb Stegall to the Kansas Court of Appeals the loss will most certainly be to you and your Administration, as I know he is a valued member of your staff. But the state of Kansas will gain a worthy jurist with a great future ahead of him on our state's appellate court."

But Caleb is more than just a brilliant legal mind. He is a husband, father, and son, and I am pleased to welcomes his wife Ann, children Simon, Jake, Ethan, Theodore and Quentin and parents Ron and Kathy who are here standing by him today. Caleb is active in his community and in his church. He is a proud Kansan and someone who will make Kansas proud.

I am proud to present my nomination for the 14th seat at the Kansas Court of Appeals, Mr. Caleb Stegall.